REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTANT SERVICES
HOMELESS SERVICE SYSTEM REDESIGN

Answers to Questions posed following the March 29, 2017 Bidder’s Conference

Question: During the webinar, I didn’t hear the last part of the deliverable related to recommendations for three sets of performance standards. Can you elaborate?

Answer: We have program standards that were developed by providers on a consensus basis. We are looking for redline versions that would show us suggested replacements and additions to make them consistent with a Housing First system, not new ones whole cloth.

Question: In your presentation, you talked about how Sonoma County’s Homeless Assistance System is in the midst of a shift towards a Housing First approach. And that your funding process now incorporates outcomes and system performance measures. Are many of your providers prepared for this new approach?

Answer: Several of our providers have been investing in learning more about a Housing First approach and wish to make a transition. Others have been reticent to make this shift and have philosophical objections to it. There is a wide variety in how prepared providers are for a Housing First approach.

Our agency has been using outcomes and performance measures in our contracts for about 5 years. A 10-year old County initiative called Upstream Investments (http://www.upstreaminvestments.org/) has created system-wide buy-in to evidence-based practice generally. Our agency has collaborated with the Upstream project to educate homeless service providers about outcomes-driven investments. In the last several years we have introduced HEARTH performance measures as required contract elements. Some providers are resisting characterizing these as the primary measurements of success, for example they wish to characterize exits from shelter to transitional housing as a success. So in summary, they are prepared for outcomes-based investing but not necessarily for Housing First practice.

Question: Are there other systems redesign planning discussions underway? Particularly around outcomes and system performance measures? And integrating Housing First approaches? Do providers have access to resources to support the adoption of these new approaches?

Answer: There are numerous planning efforts underway, and some such as Upstream Investments and Sonoma County Health Action (http://www.sonomaahealthaction.org/).
beginning in 2010) use outcomes, indicators and a collective impact approach that were integrated into the Continuum of Care 10-Year Plan in its 2014 Update. In 2015, the County developed a “Building HOMES Toolbox” laying out the housing need and describing the many approaches to funding new housing construction; “Housing for All” is one of four key priorities adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in 2017, and “Housing First” has been endorsed in theory. It is understood that implementation of Housing First practice is the bailiwick of the CoC and service providers, and takes shape via this “redesign” effort.

In the past year a new effort, the Santa Rosa Homeless Collective (SRHC, https://santarosahomelesscollective.wordpress.com/), engaged new players including the local business and faith communities in the County’s largest city, and aligned itself with the Continuum of Care and other County-wide efforts. In January 2017, SRHC hosted a Summit on Homeless Solutions that featured Iain de Jong and other OrgCode staff. Although some public agencies and nonprofits had quietly begun a shift to Housing First practice in the past decade or so, this was the first well attended public education session that challenged the “housing readiness” model based on the data. Some attendees expressed indignation about some of the information provided, and others took the argument to heart to change their advocacy approach. With the funds remaining, OrgCode proposed some continuing technical assistance focused on Housing First practice and also participated in the 4/4 Santa Rosa City Council study session on Housing First (which had a more system-wide focus). The SRHC has contributed to both the county-wide discussion and the City’s understanding of solutions to homelessness, in the context of advocacy focused on a homeless emergency declaration, “tiny homes,” and sanctioned parking and camping.

The City of Santa Rosa has been exploring Housing First systems approaches on a parallel track and just held an excellent study session as part of their April 4th City Council meeting. As noted above, many of the service providers are committed to a data culture. Numerous funders have expressed interest in aligning their funding strategies with Housing First and we anticipate they will be involved in this process.

While some providers have sought out training and technical assistance, as of yet they have little access to financial resources to support adoption of new approaches. County and CoC staff are collecting baseline information about implementation of Housing First strategies to inform technical assistance strategies. We would be open to recommendations about funding such technical assistance.

**Question:** Will the County share the list of attendees for the RFP webinar?

**Answer:** Yes, we also sent an email to this group noting that the slides were posted to our website, and all email addresses were visible.

--Bridget DeJong, HomeBase: bridget@homebaseccc.org
--Erin Wixstein, OrgCode: ewixsten@orgcode.com
--Sarah Garmisa, Resource Development Associates: sgarmisa@resourcedevelopment.net
--Steven Shum, Corporation for Supportive Housing: steven.shum@csh.org
--Steve Kennedy, Insight Information: steve.kennedy@insightinformation.com
**Question:** Is it the intent of the Commission that the Reports (A-C) be presented as complete at the ~16 meetings listed in on page 4 (#3 of the scope of work), or that these meetings inform development of the Reports?

**Answer:** The latter – the meetings are primarily intended to inform development of the Reports. However we anticipate at least 2 meetings at the end of the effort, which would be to present on the consultant’s findings.

**Question:** Is the scope of work on pages 4-5 of the RFP intended to reflect the order/timeline of the activities to be performed?

**Answer:** No, we expect the consultant to develop a timeline of activities that will support development of the three sections of the report. They are not necessarily to be completed in the order stated here.

**Question:** If we believe the entire scope of work will cost more than the $50,000 cap, how would you like us to address this?

**Answer:** Please break out your budget proposal by the various pieces and let us know the breakdown and total cost. We will evaluate the cost proposal along with the overall proposal for services.

**Question:** How do you imagine tackling this as a community? Who are all these players, and who would be the audiences at the ~16 community meetings?

**Answer:** We anticipate several meetings with the Community Development Committee (our advisory body), as well as the Continuum of Care Board and membership, providers, and other funders including City of Santa Rosa and possibly other city staff. At some meetings the content will be educational and at others, soliciting feedback. The schedule is, to some extent, driven by our County funding calendar and the updating of funding policies that takes place annually June through September.

**Question:** Is the Community Development Commission involved with development of the Whole Person Care Pilot? (Some communities are using this funding for their coordinated entry systems.) Are you working on the No Place Like Home initiative?

**Answer:** Sonoma County Behavioral Health has submitted a Whole Person Care Pilot application in the second round and is awaiting response. As we understand it, the proposal would fund a geographic expansion of the Community Intervention Program (CIP), which currently operates in the Santa Rosa area only, in a place-based strategy being pursued for services generally in this 1500+ square mile county. More information about the CIP is located here: [http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/meetings/pdf/mhboard/ppt_20140617.pdf](http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/meetings/pdf/mhboard/ppt_20140617.pdf).
Sonoma County Behavioral Health is currently conducting its 3-year Mental Health Services Act plan, and will be using the results to plan for the local No Place Like Home efforts in partnership with the Community Development Commission.

We have used Continuum of Care funds to develop our Coordinated Entry Pilot and just entered into contract with HUD for an expansion grant to implement Coordinated Entry with all homeless subpopulations. The Continuum of Care is entering into a concurrent planning effort to ensure compliance with the recently released full federal requirements.

**Question:** We are interested in this scope of work and believe we would be competitive. We are wondering if the timeline for this project is flexible. We are not available to begin work on May 15, but would be able to perform all of the scope of work by the deadline specified in the RFP. Is the start date flexible?

**Answer:** May 15 is an optimistic start date. Not being able to start immediately is probably not a deal-breaker; the quality of each proposal in the context of the field of proposals we receive is the most important. Finishing by September 15th is more pressing as some of the work feeds into our annual calendar.